

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. Software stored on a computer-readable storage medium at a user station that is configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

a monitor function that automatically monitors a data stream supplied by a selected one of the data sources to identify receipt of desired data; and,

a capture function that automatically captures the desired data identified by the monitor function;

wherein the data stream includes both the desired data and other data.

2. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the capture function automatically captures the desired data by storing it in temporary storage within the user station.

3. The software as set forth in Claim 2, further comprising a fetch function that fetches the desired data from the temporary storage.

4. The software as set forth in Claim 2, further comprising a fetch function that fetches the desired data from the temporary storage, and prepares it for use.

5. The software as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising a user interface function that enables a user to select the data source from a listing of available data sources.

6. The software as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising an application programming interface that enables a higher-level software entity to select the data source from a listing of available data sources.

7. The software as set forth in Claim 6, wherein the higher-level software entity contains the

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software.

8. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the data stream is broadcast by the selected data source.

9. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein:
the user station is equipped with a tuner that is selectively tunable to a selected one of a plurality of available broadcast data channels; and,
the data stream comprises the data stream broadcast by the selected data source via the selected one of the plurality of available broadcast data channels.

10. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the desired data comprises data to which a user at the user station is entitled.

11. The software as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising a selector function that can be invoked to tune the user station to a selected one of a plurality of available broadcast data channels, wherein the data stream automatically monitored by the monitor function comprises the data stream broadcast by the selected data source via the selected one of the plurality of available broadcast data channels.

12. The software as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising a selector function that can be invoked to select the data stream automatically monitored by the monitor function from a plurality of available data channels.

13. The software as set forth in Claim 12, further comprising an application programming interface, wherein the selector function can be invoked through the application programming interface.

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14. The software as set forth in Claim 12, further comprising an application programming interface interconnecting the selector function and the monitor function.

15. The software as set forth in Claim 12, further comprising:
a user interface function that enables a user at the user station to invoke the selector function;
and,
an application programming interface interconnecting the user interface function and the selector function.

16. A method for operating a user station that is configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:
monitoring a data stream supplied by a selected one of the data sources to identify receipt of desired data; and,
capturing the desired data identified by the monitoring operation;
wherein the data stream includes both the desired data and other data.

17. The method as set forth in Claim 16, wherein the capturing is performed by storing the desired data identified by the monitoring operation in temporary storage within the user station.

18. The method as set forth in Claim 17, further comprising fetching the desired data from the temporary storage.

19. The method as set forth in Claim 18, further comprising preparing the fetched data for use.

20. The method as set forth in Claim 16, further comprising selecting the data source from a listing of available data sources.

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21. The method as set forth in Claim 20, wherein an application programming interface enables a higher-level software entity to perform the operation of selecting the data source from the listing of available data sources.

22. The method as set forth in Claim 16, wherein the data stream is broadcast by the selected data source.

23. The method as set forth in Claim 16, wherein:
the user station is equipped with a tuner that is selectively tunable to a selected one of a plurality of available broadcast data channels; and,
the data stream comprises the data stream broadcast by the selected data source via the selected one of the plurality of available broadcast data channels.

24. The method as set forth in Claim 16, wherein the desired data comprises data to which a user at the user station is entitled.

25. The method as set forth in Claim 16, further comprising tuning the user station to a selected one of a plurality of available broadcast data channels, wherein the data stream that is monitored comprises the data stream broadcast by the selected data source via the selected one of the plurality of available broadcast data channels.

26. The method as set forth in Claim 16, further comprising selecting the data stream that is monitored from a plurality of available data channels.

27. The method as set forth in Claim 16, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

28. A user station that is configured for communications with a multiplicity of independently-operated data sources via a non-proprietary network, comprising:

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means for monitoring a data stream supplied by a selected one of the data sources to identify receipt of desired data; and,

5 means for capturing the desired data identified by the monitoring operation;
wherein the data stream includes both the desired data and other data.

29. The user station as set forth in Claim 28, wherein the means for capturing stores the desired data identified by the means for monitoring in temporary storage within the user station.

30. The user station as set forth in Claim 29, further comprising means for fetching the desired data from the temporary storage.

31. The user station as set forth in Claim 30, further comprising means for preparing the fetched data for use.

32. The user station as set forth in Claim 28, further comprising means for selecting the data source from a listing of available data sources.

33. The user station as set forth in Claim 28, wherein the data stream is broadcast by the selected data source.

34. The user station as set forth in Claim 28, further comprising a tuner that is selectively tunable to a selected one of a plurality of available broadcast data channels, wherein the data stream comprises the data stream broadcast by the selected data source via the selected one of the plurality of available broadcast data channels.

35. The user station as set forth in Claim 28, wherein the desired data comprises data to which a user at the user station is entitled.

37. The user station as set forth in Claim 28, further comprising means for selecting the data stream that is monitored from a plurality of available data channels.

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